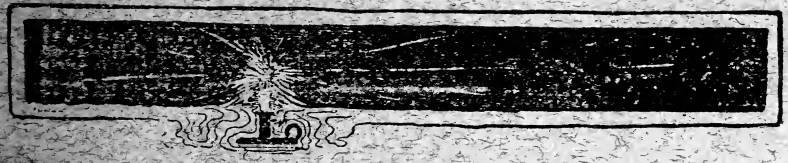
The Quest of Christmas

—BY—

JULIA M. MARTIN



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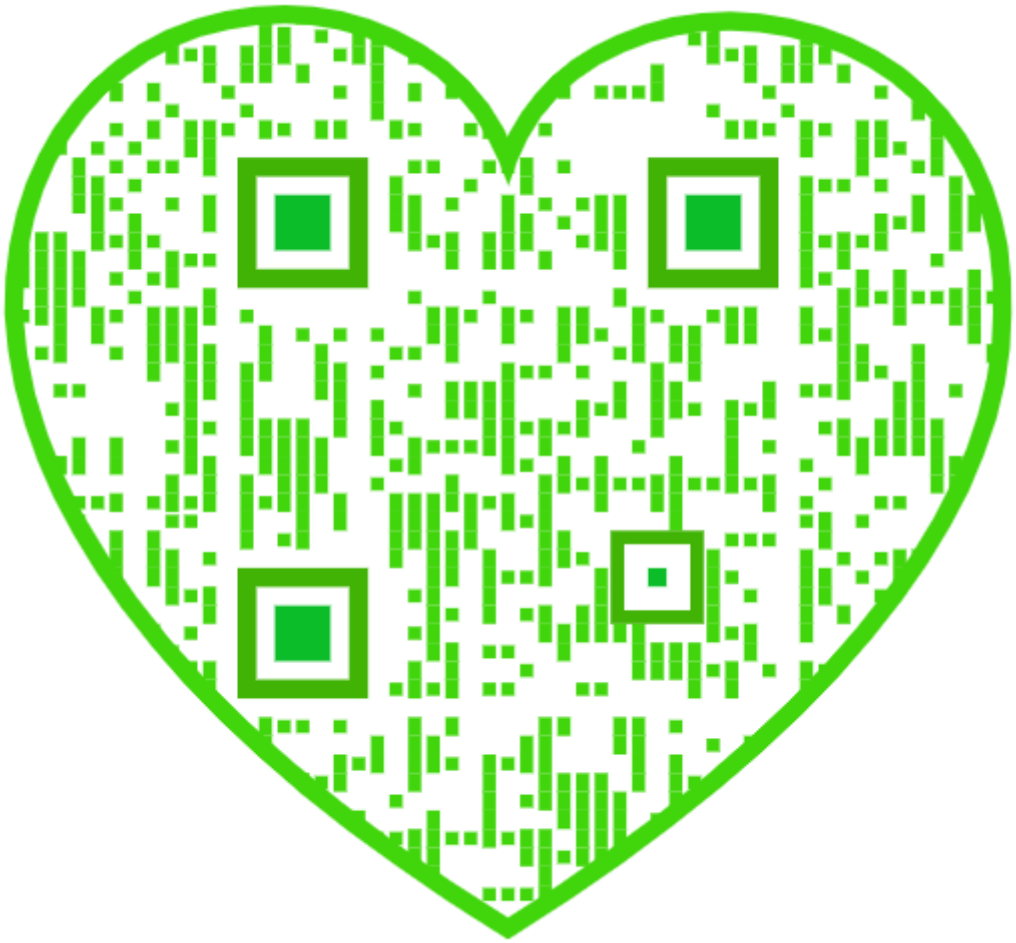

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Training Mary

By Mary Shaw Page. A bright 1-act play with simple stage setting. William, husband of Mary, essays to train Mary, especially along the lines of correcting carelessness. As is always the case, William gets in deep water, but finally wades out. 2 males, 4 females, and plays about 45 minutes. Price, 25c.

The Hired Man's Courtship

By Alice Cripps. A short comedy-drama in 2 acts. Captain Edwards tires of wealth and the city, and procures work on Horton's farm, only to find that the farmer's daughter is an old sweetheart. Because of an intrigue on the part of the captain's cousin, an estrangement takes place, which ends happily when the captain finds the source of certain stories and refutes them. Aunt Hepsey, Jim and Ezra (colored), add comedy to the play. Plays about 45 minutes, and is for 3 males and 3 females. Price, 25c.

Merely Anne Marie

A comedy in 3 acts by Beulah King. 3 males, 5 females. Time, 2½ hours. The scenes are laid in a fashionable boarding house, and the characters are all distinct types and worth while. A successful playwright, desiring to escape notoriety, seeks seclusion at Mrs. Teague's and becomes the hero of Anne Marie, the dining room maid. The dialogue is bright, the situations clever and the story ends happily. 35c.

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By Fannie Barnett Linsky. Comedy-drama in 2 acts. Francina, who is to play at the recital, composes her own number. On the evening of the recital, Mary Sherman, who precedes her on the program, plays Francina's compositions, which she has stolen. The reasons for the theft all come out later and of course, all ends well. Nine characters. Plays about 1 hour. Price, 35c.

Miss Burnett Puts One Over

By Ethelyn Sexton. A rollicking 1-act girls' play for 6 characters. Barbara's mother has a friend, Ann Burnett, who is to visit the girls at college, with the intention of giving a generous sum to the school. The girls, wishing o gain her good will, practice their "manners." Miss Burnett, however, appears in disguise and has much fun at their expense. All ends well and the school gets the money. Plays about 45 minutes. Easy setting and costumes. Price, 25c.

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944 S. Logan St.

THE QUEST OF CHRISTMAS

By JULIA M MARTIN

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The Quest of Christmas

(The Whitson family have just set up their Christmas tree, ornamented as yet only with its own dark foliage, when Mr. Whitson enters.)

Father—Thought I told you once for all, this year we shall have no Christmas. Let us have no fuss about it—Christmas wasn't meant for poor folk. What with taxes, what with freight rates, what with half a price for apples, what with losing on the hay crop, there'll be nothing left for Christmas. Now let that be understood.

Margaret—(*running to hug his burly old neck*) Never mind—we shall not miss it.

(*Exit Father, left.*)

Susy—Oh, I think it's just too horrid!

Bobby—Old man's getting tighter'n ever.

Susy—(*awed*) Bobby!

Mother—(*in a low but severe tone*) Bobby, dear, how could you? Father feels it very keenly. That was why his voice was gruff.

Margaret—That was why he left the room.

Bobby—Didn't mean to be ungrateful. Well, I know how Father toils. Think, though—not to have a Christmas! Why, it's just too stupid, Mother!

Margaret—Well, I think it might be better if we all got rid of Christmas—All the fuss, I mean, and shopping.. Every year it's more expensive.

Bobby—Oh! Then whatcha crying for?

(*Margaret hastily dabs at her eyes and laughs.*)

Mother—Simply loyalty to Father prompted Margaret to say it. (*To Margaret, with a caressing hand*

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on her shoulder) And we love you for it, daughter. (*To all.*) But I doubt if we, so blessed in our family relations, wholly could get rid of Christmas by refraining from the shopping. Let us think, and wait, and see.

(*Exit Mother, left, slyly beckoning to Margaret, who follows. Enter at opposite wing, Little Idea, dancing to sprightly music.*)

Susy—Bobby! Bobby! Who is that?

Little Idea—A Little Idea, perhaps you would call me. I came into being from no one knows where. No money can tempt me; I go where I fancy. For purse and pretension 'Tis little I care.

Susy—What a pretty thing she is! Oh, if we could only keep her!

Little Idea—I'm very desirable just before Christmas, and people who capture me find the day bright. So don't be a stupid; wake up and pursue me. Just pucker your forehead and follow my flight.

Susy—So I will. If I could catch her!

(*Exit Little Idea, followed by Susy, rear. Enter Puck, at right, dancing fantastically.*)

Bobby—Who can that be, now, I wonder?

Puck—Don't you know who I am? Puck, the soul of fun. Want to know a secret? Well, I'll tell you one. I'm a friend of Christmas; I know his address. 'Tisn't in a bank book—make another guess. (*He starts out, making a sportive thrust at Bobby as he goes.*)

Bobby—Wait a minute, little fellow—maybe you could help us out. Won't you spend your Christmas with us? We should never miss the presents if we seated at our table such a jolly lad as you.

Puck—If you truly want me, look for me—ho ho! Where I am invited I'm pretty sure to go.

(*Enter Margaret and Mother L.*)

Mother—Something, surely, we could plan. Darling, where's our thinking cap?

(*Margaret puckers her forehead. Enter at right, Forethought, with the cap on.*)

Margaret—Oh, where can it be? Why, Mother, someone else is wearing it. (*Points at Forethought.*)

Forethought—Just a tiny Forethought. That is all my name. Thought I might be useful, So, you see, I came. (*She places her cap on Mother's head and bows to do her honor. Then she steps aside and stands puckering her brow and occasionally moving her lips as if in profound abstraction. Enter Co-operation, right, carrying a pair of scissors.*)

Co-operation—Knew you'd like to have me come. So I thought I would. Now you'll work together well, as dame and daughter should. Guess my name.

Mother—Co-operation.

Co-operation—Right—I thought you would. Look—without the other blade, neither's any good. (*As he speaks, Co-operation holds the scissors open. Then he presents them to Margaret and takes his place beside Forethought.*)

Margaret—Scissors will be useful, Mother. We shall use this pair together.

(*Enter Invention and Economy, both at right.*)

Invention—Invention will come to your rescue when Riches and Luxury won't. She's a far better friend to have in the end. She grows as you spend; they don't. (*She unfolds a reindeer pattern cut out of heavy paper.*) Now, why not a gingerbread reindeer? He's for your table, you know. This fellow was seen in an old magazine. I traced him, to cut in the dough. (*She lays the reindeer pattern in Mother's lap, and begins to adorn the tree with long processions of little reindeer cut out of white paper.*)

Economy—After the reindeer is cut from the dough, Little odd bits will be left, you know. Don't for mercy's sake, throw them away. Make them all count for your Christmas day. They will make many a star or bell, but

that isn't what I was going to tell. (*She unrolls paper.*) These are the spangles I cut for the tree. Guess what they're made of. I give you them free.

Margaret—Made of something bright and pretty. We should have to buy it though.

Economy—Don't be too sure till you know what they are. Here is a yellow one, shaped like a star. Took an old syrup can; loosened the label—Result, a bright spangle for tree or for table! Pasted two stars back to back, as you see. So it's pretty all round as it twirls from the tree. (*She twirls it and then hangs it, twirling, on the tree.*) Here is a red one I shaped like a bell. Made of a soap wrapper! Now could you tell? Magazine covers I also find ready to serve an ingenious mind.

Margaret—What's your name? I'd like to know you.

Economy—You could learn it of your mother; she has known me long and well.

Mother—'Tis Economy, my dear.

(*Enter Father and Susy L., with an armful of boughs.*)

Father—After all, I brought some green. Thought it wouldn't cost a penny. Just to brighten up a bit. (*He stops, amazed at seeing the company present. Sternly.*) Then you did invite some guests?

Mother—Yes, a few good angels, Father. we invited unawares.

(*Enter rear, Puck, Bobby and Little Idea, hand in hand.*)

Bobby—Hello, folks! You didn't know there'd be guests for Christmas, did you? (*Stops amazed at seeing those already present.*)

Susy—(*clapping hands gleefully*) Oh, yes, Bobby, yes, we did!

Bobby—Guests for Christmas—I should say so! Well, you see, I brought you more.

Father—(*recognizing Forethought and crossing to shake hands with her*) This is Forethought, I declare!

Bobby—(*wondering*) Father seems to know them, too.

Forethought—Yes, indeed, your loving father is no stranger, child, to Forethought.

Father—Come to think about it now, I've invited guests myself. (*He admits at left door, Christmas Inspiration, who carries a ham-shaped parcel, tied with a narrow red ribbon.*)

Christmas Inspiration—(*modestly*) Mr. Whitson just remembered that you needed some supplies, so he purchased them today, thinking they would seem, perhaps, in a way, a Christmas present. (*She holds up the ham.*)

Father—And I think she even whispered in the jolly grocer's ear ,since he tied them up with ribbon. (*Admitting Pop-Corn Ball at left door.*) Then I just remembered Pop-Corn. He's a very wholesome guest, rather sweet of disposition and so sensible, as well!

Pop-Corn Ball—You nearly forgot the Pop-Corn Ball, who wishes you Merry Christmas, all. I've wondered you didn't prize me more, when I've been with you oft before. I'm white as the troublous cotton snow, that some folk put on the tree, you know. I'm fully as white; I'm just as light, and I wonder you hadn't found me so. But I haven't sulked, nor pined away. Keep light of heart, I say. I'm daintier far than heavy sweets, that leave you a head that throbs and beats: I'm prettier, too, on the Christmas tree, as I twirl and wind and bob, you see. (*Whirling and bobbing.*) I'm a safer thing than a candle's glow; I make you grow—like me, you know—And I'm nearly as bright as the candle light. I wonder you haven't remarked it, though. But I haven't sulked at neglect, at all—Keep sweet, says a Pop-Corn Ball.

Bobby—Pop-Corn Ball is a jolly fellow.

(*Enter, right, Christmas Carol.*)

Bobby—Who's the latest guest, I wonder?

(*Christmas Carol waltzes to the center of stage and sings any good Christmas carol; then recites*:)

I'm just a little Christmas air
That drifts upon your ear,
But you're so wealthy, scarcely have you
Need of me, I fear.
In a tender thought, in a heart that loves
Is the key to Christmas Day.
You're far too rich to need me, so,
You see, I float away. (*Waltzing toward door.*)

(*The family intercepts her and brings her back to center of stage. Some member recites.*)

You lovely Christmas melody,
You sha'n't, you sha'n't depart!
Too sweetly have you charmed the ear
And hovered 'round the heart.
In a song that lilts, in a song that thrills,
Is the soul of Christmas day.
You tender little Christmas air,
You've come, you see, to stay.

(*From behind the scenes, at right, they are pelted with snowballs by Surprise, who now bounds into view, young and rosy.*)

Surprise—Ho—you didn't see me! Thought you wouldn't, though. (*Pointing at Bobby.*) Tell me—can you say my name? Wrong—it isn't "Snow." People never guess it—everybody tries. Well, I'll have to tell you, then. Poof! I'm Surprise.

(*As he says "Poof!" he shakes over them a little shower of snowflakes, to the great delight of Bob and Susy. Enter four figures, who, standing behind the family, draw its five members closer together by joining hands and resting them on the shoulders of the five, reciting in unison*:)

Even with all the fair host you've assembled,
Christmas could never be Christmas we fear,
If we, the sweet Family Bonds of Affection,
Did not partake your festivities here.

Father's dear thoughtfulness, toil unremitting,
Mother's dear tenderness, patience and care—
These are the things we remember at Christmas;
Yet, all the year the kind effort was there.

Margaret's ready and dexterous fingers,
Susy's caresses and Bobby's good will—
These, and the Family Bonds of Affection,
Bring to the season its grace and its thrill.

Mother—(*wiping her eyes in joy, as her children embrace her*) Never, in more prosperous days, had we half so good a Christmas, had we Father?

Father—(*tenderly*) Never, Mother.

Christmas Carol—
In a song that thrills with a tender thought,
A thought that came to stay,
In a kinder heart and a brighter smile
Are the keys to Christmas Day.

(*The whole group repeats with her the four lines.*)

Bobby—Yes, I guess that Puck was right— Christmas isn't what you buy; Christmas isn't what you get, what you wear, or what you eat. Christmas just is—well, it's Christmas.

(*Curtain. All rear exits and entrances may be made at the right, if desired.*)

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